

Art Preis

The Priests Bore from Within

Roman Catholicism in the Trade Unions

(March 1949)

From **Fourth International**, [Vol.10 No.3](#), March 1949, pp.75-81.

Transcribed & marked up by [Einde O' Callaghan](#) for the **Encyclopaedia of Trotskyism On-Line (ETOL)**.

The Vatican and its vast priest-caste pursue as their most immediate objectives: 1. the destruction of the Soviet Union; 2. the preservation of the capitalist profit system. With its incalculable wealth and its centralized, professional army of clerics the Vatican is attempting to dragoon its 350 million followers into imperialism's "cold war" against the Soviet Union and to divide and disorient the working-class struggle for socialism.

These aims coincide directly with those of the ruling American capitalists, mainly Protestant. Although capitalism rose to power in centuries of revolutionary struggle against the Catholic hierarchy and its feudal order, today the capitalists recognize in the Vatican an aggressive, ruthless, cunning and immensely potent force for the defense of capitalism. These two once-mortal enemies are linked now as allies.

The Vatican is an especially welcome ally of American imperialism because of the Roman Church's ideological sway over hundreds of millions. It is using its religious influence today to compete everywhere for hegemony of the working class and control of the labor movements. Under the banner of "anti-communism," the priests are attempting to bore from within the labor unions, divide them along religious lines, crush the proponents of class struggle and place an iron clerical grip on the workers' mass organizations. In the United States too, the Catholic hierarchy is concentrating its major efforts on the, unions.

The deep penetration of the Catholic hierarchy into the American unions, particularly the CIO, is receiving favorable attention in the Big Business press. Under the title of *The Labor Priests*, the Jan. 1949 **Fortune** magazine reports:

"The new campaign launched by Pres. Philip Murray to drive out the Communists also brings to the fore another development within the CIO – the rising force of Catholicism in American labor."

Noting that a quarter of all American union leaders are Catholics, **Fortune** states:

"Most of these men, and even non-Catholics such as Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers, have welcomed Catholic support in battling Communists. Yet all of them carefully avoid *public* support of *organised* Catholic labor activity. Even

without such approval the open influence of individual Catholic clerics has been considerable, especially in the CIO.”

Fortune does not fail to note the duplicity of the top CIO bureaucrats who pretend not to recognize this organized “outside influence” in the CIO while they work hand-in-glove with it. The national CIO convention last November affords a striking illustration of this.

The convention was opened with an “invocation” by Rev. Thomas Tobin, Vicar General for Archbishop Howard of Portland, Ore. This “invocation” was a lengthy exposition of the Catholic hierarchy’s program of “industry councils,” called “corporative units” by Pope Pius XI and first established by Mussolini in his “corporative state.” The most brazen part of Rev. Tobin’s performance was when he said, “The philosophy of the Industrial Council program are thus admirably summarized on the masthead of a Detroit paper,” and then he read from this “anonymous” paper the full program printed in the **Wage-Earner**, official publication of the Detroit chapter of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU).

Far from expressing resentment at this, Murray opened his keynote address by declaring his “grateful acknowledgment of the most remarkable and inspirational address” of Rev. Tobin, adding, “His speech encompasses the program of the CIO.” Thus did the CIO head publicly link the program of the industrial unions, built by workers of every creed united in titanic class battles, with the ultra-reactionary program of the priest-ridden power machine, the ACTU.

That power machine which operated so conspicuously at the CIO convention, where a squad of priests roamed the convention and steered their faction, today boasts of significant influence and, in some instances, outright control in at least a dozen international unions, mainly CIO.

In the United Automobile Workers, where the ACTU has been in a bloc with Walter Reuther since 1947, its members or close associates hold posts on the International Executive Board, a number of top appointive posts and many offices in local unions. The **Wage-Earner**, Detroit ACTU paper, acts as the unofficial voice of the Reuther-ACTU bloc.

ACTU’ers are a force in the Steelworkers, where they are coddled by Philip Murray and hold important posts. They are dominant in the American Newspaper Guild. Paul Weber, founding editor of **Wage-Earner** and former head of the Detroit ACTU, is executive secretary of the Detroit Newspaper Guild and a vice president of the Michigan CIO. ACTU’ers hold top posts in the New York Guild local. They control the CIO Utility Workers and the independent Communications Workers, organization of telephone employees.

Worming into the TW

Their most recent triumph is in the CIO Transport Workers Union where they formed the motive power of the Quill machine that broke the control of the

Stalinists who had ruled for 14 years. A Nov. 1948 **Harper's** article, *Priests, Workers, and Communists* by Jules Weinberg, is devoted to a description, based on interviews with ACTU leaders in the TWU, of how they operated.

Catholic office workers at the New York Omnibus Company, on the "advice" of Rev. Philip A. Carey, S.J., director of the Jesuit Xavier Labor School in Manhattan, set up an independent union in competition with the "communist" TWU in 1944. After a year of "special speed-up courses" at Xavier, they took their outfit into the TWU. Here they began building a "tight, tough, trained unit" and "a stream of these men attended the Xavier Labor School. Every one of the present officers of the New York Omnibus unit is a graduate."

Now the ACTU, backed by top CIO circles, particularly Secretary-Treasurer James Carey, is going after bigger game – the 400,000-member, Stalinist-ruled United Electrical Workers. The Jan. 17, 1949 **Labor Leader**, ACTU national organ, reports new triumphs of the "anti-Communist wing," which in recent local union elections captured 13 more locals, including large General Electric and Westinghouse units.

The Catholic "Labor" Schools

Jules Weinberg, in his **Harper's** article, glowingly describes the mechanism of this "most militant and successful Labor program ever engaged in by the Catholic Church in the United States." The Catholic hierarchy, starting in 1935, began a system of "labor" schools.

"They have been established in every industrial city in the nation: one hundred permanent schools, twenty-four directed by Jesuits, thirty-two by diocesan authorities, and the rest sponsored by Catholic fraternal organizations, colleges and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists," reports Weinberg. "Most of the schools came into existence between 1936 and 1944 ... And each year 7,500 men and women ... are graduated into the ranks of labor."

The **Fortune** article says that the Catholic "labor" schools "have grown up since 1934 through the active interest of 'labor priests'."

The "labor" schools and the ACTU are part of the same machine, but have separate functions. The schools provide selected and trained cadres for colonizing the unions. The ACTU operates inside the unions to put the Catholic hierarchy's program into action. Rev. William J. Smith, Jesuit priest and director of Crown Heights "labor" school in New York, described the division of function in the Jan. 1947 **Labor Leader**. The ACTU is for "direct action," he said, while the Jesuit schools are "confined" to indirect action, education technique, labor school organization and over-all indoctrination." He added, "There is plenty of work and plenty of room for both movements and both methods."

An elaborate pretense is maintained that there is no connection between the schools of the priestly orders and the ACTU, which is represented as an "independent" organization, run by its members without hierarchic direction. Roger Larkin, editor of **Labor Leader**, even goes so far as to publish a special

statement in the Jan. 17, 1949 issue, trying to disassociate the Jesuit “labor” schools from the ACTU by falsely claiming that “the first Catholic labor school was established ... by the ACTU” and “antedated any other Catholic labor school by at least one year.” However, the first school was the Xavier Labor School in New York City, established by Jesuits in 1911 as the Xavier Institute of Social Studies, and reorganized under its present name in 1935. The ACTU was founded in 1937 and its first school was established in Jan. 1938, “with the kind assistance of the Jesuit Fathers of Fordham,” states John C. Cort, one of the ACTU founders. (*Nine Years of the ACTU*, in the Jesuit weekly, **America**, April 6, 1946)

Larkin’s petty fraud is part of the bigger fraud systematically perpetrated by the ACTU to fool unionists about whose hand directs the ACTU. **Labor Leader** describes the ACTU as an “association of Catholic unionists” that “does not believe in Catholic unions in America” and “does not seek to divide the workers on religious grounds or create ‘a Catholic bloc’.” It does add, however, that its purpose “is to promote the teachings of Christ and His Church in the American labor movement” – that is, to promote Catholicism in the unions.

In a more forthright way, the Jesuit weekly **America**, Jan. 7, 1939, in an article, *Leadership in Labor a Goal for Catholic Workers*, instructs Catholics on how to build a “Catholic bloc” in the unions. It states:

“All the tricks of organization, of pressure politics, of dissent, of ‘controlled bloc’ voting can be readily absorbed by any willing labor student.”

It calls for “the erection of a strong philosophy within the union which will bear heavily upon union leaders, *so heavily as to be at last controlling* ... the admonition of the Encyclicals, that Catholics should form Christian unions, as far as possible, is morally obligatory upon us ...”

The ACTU *Articles of Federation* (**Labor Leader**, July 25, 1947) states:

“The Association takes as its charter the following mandate of Pius XI in the Encyclical, **Quadragesimo Anno**: ‘Side by side with these unions, there should always be associations zealously engaged in imbuing and forming their members in the teaching of religion and morality so that they in turn may be able to permeate the unions with that good spirit which should direct them in all their activities.’”

It deceptively omits the first part of Pope Pius XI’s injunction, which stated,

“Wherever it (is) impossible for Catholics to form Catholic unions ... they (Catholics) seem to have no choice but to enroll themselves in neutral unions ... Side by side with these trade unions, there must always be associations, etc. ...” (**Michigan Catholic**, Nov. 28, 1946.)

It is clear that the ACTU was set up under a papal mandate as an expedient where the Church finds it “impossible” to keep Catholic workers from joining “neutral” unions. But Catholic doctrine insists on the ultimate objective of separate Catholic unions.

No one is eligible for ACTU membership without specific approval by a priest. The ACTU national constitution provides for a chaplain – a priest – to “advise” all local chapters on all matters, and states: “All members of the ACTU shall be Catholic and *the Catholicity of members shall be determined by the Chaplain of the*

chapter.” By his authority to decide who shall belong or who shall be blackballed, the priest is the real power in the ACTU.

The constitution of the Detroit ACTU makes the controlling power of the hierarchy even more explicit. Article V, Section A, begins: “The officers shall be: a Chaplain appointed by the Archbishop,” and then enumerates all the other posts. Article V, Section G, states:

“It shall be the duty of the secretary-treasurer to ... submit a financial report each month to the Chaplain ... The Chaplain shall act in an advisory capacity and as a spiritual director of the association. He or any other priest designated by him shall be an *ex-officio* member of all committees.”

Finally, Article VII states:

“In the event of insoluble dispute over any question of policy, tactic, principle or leadership, *the counsel of the Archbishop shall be the final determinant.*”

While to non-Catholics or indifferent Catholics the ACTU emphasizes that it is an association of Catholic *trade unionists*, to the devout Catholic workers it stresses that it is a *Catholic* association of trade unionists. Thus, all ACTU literature bears the *imprimatur* – official sanction – of a high Catholic cleric. Its leaflets to the Wall Street strikers last year even boasted that the ACTU was “blessed by Pope Pius XII.”

Any claim that the ACTU is “democratic,” “independent” or “American”, is proved spurious by the very oath all members must sign: “I hereby pledge to abide by *all* the teachings and practices of my Catholic faith, including those teachings expressed in the social Encyclicals of Leo XIII, Pius XI, and Pius XII *in their entirety*. (ACTU *Articles of Federation*) In short, the ACTU is an arm of the Catholic Church.

The Power and Program of the Pope

To know the real aims of the ACTU and its program, we must examine the structure, methods, activities and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church itself, particularly its authoritarian head, the Pope. The Catholic Church is ruled by its priestly hierarchy. The inner structure of this hierarchy is totalitarian, with the priest chosen by the bishop, and the bishop chosen by the Pope on recommendation of his own hand-picked Congregation of the Consistory.

In 1870, the Pope was declared “infallible” in “defining doctrine regarding faith and morals.” Faith and morals, explained Pius XII on June 2, 1948, are not confined “within the sphere called ‘purely religious,’ meaning by the phrase exclusion from any penetration into public life.” Accordingly the popes have decreed exactly what the economic, social and political order must be.

Thus; Leo XIII ordained in his **Human Liberty** that even a “democratic” government might be tolerated, “if only the Catholic doctrine be maintained as to the origin and exercise of power.” And wherever “ecclesiastical and civil” authorities conflict, says the **Catholic Encyclopedia**, ‘the jurisdiction of the

Church prevails.” Pius XI, in his **Reconstructing the Social Order**, added that “the truth entrusted to Us by God and Our weighty office ... demand that both social and economic questions be brought within Our supreme jurisdiction ...”

First of all, “God’s truth” as laid down by Leo XIII in **The Condition of the Working Class**, from which the Catholic labor program stems, is: “Our *first and most fundamental* principle ... must be *the inviolability of private property*.” Pius XII, in his Sept. 1944 Vatican radio address, proscribed any social order “that denies ... the *natural* right to ownership of commodities and *means of production*.”

Secondly, “The Church condemns the various forms of Marxian socialism,” banned by all popes since 1848, said Pius XII; while Pius XI anathematized even socialist groups that “have abandoned class war and no longer attack private property” because they “do not repudiate the basic socialist idea, merely repudiate it in practice.”

Thirdly, Leo XIII, in his famous Encyclical, ordained fixed classes like those of feudalism under the medieval church-state, saying, “Let it be laid down ... that humanity must remain as it is ... There *naturally* exist among mankind innumerable differences ... and unequal fortune is a necessary result of inequality of condition” which “must accompany man so long as life lasts.” Therefore, rich and poor do not form classes “intended by nature to live at war with one another ...”

Basic Doctrine of the ACTU

The ACTU is an organization, therefore, to impose the following basic doctrines on the unions:

1. the Roman Catholic Church is the supreme authority on all matters and stands above all governments, and the Pope is the “infallible” authority of the Church;
2. the system of capitalist private property and profits is “inviolable”;
3. the “basic idea” of socialism and communism contravenes “God’s truth”; and
4. there must be no basic social change, all classes must remain fixed and each person must stay in his class.

Since the pontiffs laid down these doctrines as nothing less than Divine Revelations, they never felt required to meet the scientific analysis of Marxism showing the internal contradictions of capitalism, its decline and decay and its replacement, through working-class struggle, by the classless socialist society. ACTU members, of course, may not examine Marxism for themselves, for the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and other great working-class teachers are on the Vatican’s **Index librorum prohibitorum**. This is the list of thousands of great books that Catholics are forbidden to read, for “excommunication, specially reserved to the Holy See, is incurred, *ipso facto* ... by those who knowingly read or keep such books without due permission.” (**Moral and Pastoral Theology**, by Rev. Henry Davis, imprimatur Archbishop of Birmingham.)

But since the papal social pronouncements were all issued in times of capitalist crisis to pacify the workers and discourage class struggle, the popes had to offer a substitute for Marxism which would promise to alleviate poverty and exploitation. A major point of this substitute, as stated in the ACTU *Articles of Federation*, is: “a share in the profits after a just wage and a just return to capital have been paid.”

First let us see what the popes had in mind by a “just wage” and a “just profit.” According to Leo XIII’s **Rerum Novarum**, it is the “dictate of natural justice” that “wages ought not to be insufficient to support a *frugal* and *well-behaved* wage-earner.” That says it all! A “just” wage is enough to keep a man alive and fit to return to work the next day – provided he is “frugal” and doesn’t buy a couple of beers, go to a movie or purchase “dangerous” literature like the **Fourth International** or **The Militant**.

What is a “just” profit? The most explicit definition to be found in Catholic writings is in the book, **Distributive Justice**, published in 1942 by Monsignor John A. Ryan, who is called “the father of the church labor program in America.” He said the Church advocates “profit-sharing,” whereby the worker, in addition to his “frugal” wages, would get “a part of *surplus* profits.” But first of all “owners of capital must be assured the *prevailing rate of interest*. It is not feasible to give any part of profits to workers *until owners of capital have obtained this prevailing rate*.” The “prevailing rate,” of course, is always the average maximum rate the capitalists can squeeze out at any given time.

If there is any “surplus” profit left, says Father Ryan, this should go, “to the *workers exclusively*” (original emphasis), which sounds mighty generous until we read “that is, to persons who do any work in any capacity, whether subordinate or *directive* ... from *president* down to office boy. The distribution should be *in proportion to salaries and wages*.” So – if there is any “surplus” profit after the “just” profit has been paid – the head of a corporation, who is paid \$300,000 a year would get 100 times more of the “surplus” than a worker who gets \$3,000. Some “distributive justice”!

We can understand still better the kind of “profit-sharing” schemes the ACTU has in mind when we read in **Labor Leader** (Dec. 27, 1948) praise for such anti-union propositions as those of Eastman-Kodak and other non-union firms. The June 28, 1948 **Labor Leader** praises a speech by Charles Luckman, head of Lever Bros., to the American Management Association, in which he offered a plan to raise production and wages simultaneously, saying: “American industry can well afford to increase a worker’s wage by 30% in return for 30% more output ...”

Most employers will buy that. But in the years between 1900 and 1929, the American workers got their bellies full of these phony “profit-sharing,” “multiple-partnership” and similar “carrot-before-the-donkey’s-nose” devices used by the employers to speed up production and keep out unionism.

Industry Councils, the Cure-All

The ACTU's big cure-all for capitalist depressions, inflation, war, exploitation and mass poverty is "industry councils" where "representatives of management, labor and the government might sit down together and work out regulations for each industry." (Resolution of ACTU 1947 convention.) The 1948 resolution complains that ACTU opponents are "trying to pin the label of 'Fascism'" on this scheme and claims that Murray and Reuther have publicly admitted that the CIO's "industry council" plan is "similar to that proposed by Pope Pius XI."

If that is the case, it is indeed a sinister development in the CIO. That can easily be seen when we study what Pius XI and Pius XII had in mind when they proposed "corporative units" – they never used the term "industry councils," which the ACTU has employed only in the past few years to identify its scheme with that of the CIO.

Monsignor John A. Ryan, in his previously quoted **Distributive Justice**, explains that "the conflict between classes can be controlled only by the state. 'Where We speak of the reform of the social order,' says Pope Pius XI, 'it is principally the state we have in mind'." Rev. Ryan hastens to explain that "the Holy Father does not want state ownership and operation of the means of production." No, the vicar of Christ "would eliminate class conflict not by a futile effort to abolish classes, but by bringing them into a practical scheme of co-operation."

That cooperation, said Pius XI, must be "re-establishment of occupational groups"; and Rev. Ryan explains, "He takes as a model the guild system, which united master, journeymen and apprentices in one association."

There is one "small" difference, however, between the relations of the master, journeyman and apprentice of feudal days and the capitalist and worker of today. The apprentice and journeyman were *masters in training* and after a fixed time became masters themselves, owning their own shops. The modern worker is a proletarian – a "propertyless one" – who lives by selling his labor power to a capitalist who owns the means of production but does not work himself. Moreover, the apprentice and journeyman had no *independent* organization. They were bound by the rules of the guild. Such a system today would deprive the workers entirely of any *independent* organized power.

Further, explains Ryan, "the occupational groups would not be entirely independent of government," for the state, "says Pius XI, would perform the tasks which it alone can effectively accomplish: those of 'directing, watching, stimulation, and restraining, as circumstances suggest or necessity demands'." By "state," of course, the Pope means the *capitalist* state.

Spawned by Fascism

Where have we seen such a system in operation? First of all, in the "corporative state" of Mussolini, in Franco's Spain, in Salazar's Portugal. More recently, in a letter addressed to a French Catholic society and made public on July 20, 1946,

Pope Pius XII expressed disapproval of proposed nationalization measures in France and called instead for “the institution of corporative associations or units in every branch of the national economy.” Sure enough, the Catholic would-be Franco of France, de Gaulle, now calls for “a fundamental change in trade unionism” and for “associations of labor, capital and management.” The ACTU’s **Wage-Earner** greeted de Gaulle’s scheme and pleaded editorially that unionists should “learn more” about it “before we go roaring out and condemning Gen. de Gaulle as the apostle of a new fascism.”

But so completely identified is the papacy’s “corporative units” with fascism, that it is understandable why a meeting in Oct. 1948 of 140 bishops and archbishops of the American hierarchy issued a statement saying:

“American Catholic students of the social encyclicals have expressed their preference for the name ‘Industry Councils’ to designate the basic organs of a Christian and American type of economic democracy ...”

They “prefer” not to call these “organs of democracy” by their right name – the well known fascist “corporative units.”

Writing on the “industry council” scheme in his book, **Spotlight on Labor** (published in 1946), the Rev. William J. Smith, S.J., shows what the hierarchy has in mind by citing the “5,000 successful union-management committees”

during the war. He forgot to add that most of these committees fell apart when the worker found out they were just speed-up committees to work out ways of squeezing more production out of the employees. Rev. Francis J. Haas, well known as a government mediator, in the Oct. 1944 **Acolyte** (now **The Priest**), relates the “industry councils” to the “tripartite system” which has “worked with more than average success ... in railroads under the Railway Labor Act ... and perhaps more dramatically under the War Labor Board.” American labor has an opposite opinion about these notorious strikebreaking, wage-freezing “labor-management-government” agencies.

All such schemes of “partnership” and “cooperation” are designed to persuade the workers that they do not need to engage in class struggle, that the owning class and the propertyless class have the “same interests,” that exploiters and exploited need only “sit down and plan together” under the “guidance” of a benevolent capitalist government and all the inherent evils of capitalism will disappear.

Describing the founding of the ACTU (**Nine Years of the ACTU**), John C. Cort writes:

“In the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, in the writings of Monsignor John A. Ryan and other Catholic authorities they (ACTU founders) already had a program. It was simply a question of applying it to the American scene.”

He adds with unconscious humor:

“As it finally came out, the program was probably *the most extraordinary combination of radicalism, conservatism and plain common sense ever seen in the American labor movement.*”

Whatever the ingredients of this stew, it has a *capitalist* flavor, because the Roman Catholic Church is a *capitalist* institution – the wealthiest in the world outside of

the US government itself. Its mortal hatred of socialism, its frenzied defense of private profit flow not from spiritual considerations, but material self-interest. For the Vatican is a gigantic banker, landlord and industrial capitalist combined.

The poor in the slums and tenements of cities like Rome, Paris, Madrid and New York, may riot know it, but when they curse the extortions of their landlord they are quite often cursing the Vatican, which is the greatest real estate owner on earth. The colonial slaves in Indonesia, Indo-China, the Philippines, North Africa, and Latin America who are fighting against imperialism are also fighting the Vatican, for it owns immense tracts of farmlands and plantations in these lands, grinding profit from the poorest of the poor. In Hungary, it is not only the issue of the schools that has aroused the Vatican and its allies, but expropriation of the 1,500,000 acres of Church-owned land on which tens of thousands toiled in virtual feudal serfdom. The Church owns a third of all land in Spain, as well as a third of its industrial shares.

As a result of the scandal involving Vatican agents in the illegal manipulation of French currency, it was disclosed in the French National Assembly last year that the Vatican controls directly or indirectly scores of investment, land and credit banks in Italy and France. These banks in turn control numerous industrial firms. The disclosures revealed that the Vatican controls one-third of all Italian savings – 400 billion lire! It has investments of more than 30 billion francs in France and similar sums in Belgium, where, in addition, the Church receives state subsidies. In the United States, the Vatican collaborates closely with the House of Morgan and owns hundreds of millions worth of real estate and industrial stocks and bonds.

The Vatican publishes no balance sheets, gives no financial accountings. Its top inner circle alone knows the extent of its property and income – on which it pays no taxes. It extracts contributions of hundreds of millions each year just from its faithful. The Vatican is BIG BUSINESS.

Fundamentally Opposed to Unionism

As an exploiter of labor with a vast vested interest in capitalism, the Vatican is fundamentally opposed to unionism. It prefers the destruction of all unions, as in Spain and Portugal, both countries where the Roman Catholic Church is a state-supported religious monopoly. Next to no unions, it prefers Catholic unions, as in Italy, France, Belgium, Holland and Canada, although only a minority of the Catholic workers are in these unions which are generally despised as strikebreaking outfits. Only when the Catholic workers flock into legitimate class organizations in defiance of the Church, does the hierarchy resort to “parallel” organizations like the ACTU.

The Church has never shown any interest in “aiding” the workers until the workers turn to class-struggle methods and threaten capitalist interests. Leo XIII’s famous encyclical on labor in 1891 followed the formation of the Second (Socialist) International and the great upsurge of the eight-hour day struggle in America and Europe. Shortly before, in 1886, Leo XIII had decreed a “spiritual

death sentence” – excommunication – for Catholic members of the Knights of Labor in Canada and was persuaded to withdraw the ban only when Cardinal Gibbons protested that there were many thousands of Catholic Knights in the United States and that

“... you cannot let thousands of Catholic workingmen *be driven from the Church* without trying to save them. If we allow the ban to exist, *the results will be disastrous.*”

Neither the Catholic unions nor such outfits as the ACTU have ever been the form of organization demanded or created by the Catholic workers themselves. On the contrary, even in countries where the workers are almost 100% Catholic, as in Italy today, they have always fought for their own *class* organizations. Nowhere in the world has the Church been able to force more than a small proportion of Catholic workers into its priest-controlled unions.

The American hierarchy’s first intensive interest in labor was in 1919, during the great postwar strike wave. Then, the bishops issued their **Program of Social Reconstruction**, which included in its 12 points a proposal for the peacetime continuation of the strikebreaking War Labor Board. After the victory of the open shop in the mass industries, the bishops settled back and forgot about “social reconstruction.”

It was not until millions of Catholic workers had already joined the CIO in the 1930’s and fought successfully in mighty class battles, that the hierarchy again decided to intervene. But the Catholic “labor” schools and the ACTU made little headway between 1936 and 1946. Catholic unionists, both leaders and rank-and-file, looked with hostility on the Church’s “labor” activity.

James Carey, when head of the United Electrical Workers, wrote strong protests against the interference of the hierarchy and the ACTU in the UE’s affairs. Michael Quill, president of the Transport Workers Union, publicly denounced the ACTU as “scabs” and “strikebreakers.” Philip Murray was attacked many times in the ACTU press for “playing ball with the Commies.” Daniel J. Tobin, head of the AFL Teamsters and a devout Catholic, issued a blistering attack in the **International Teamster** against the interjection of religion into the unions.

How Catholic workers reacted to the ACTU is stated by Ray Wescott, ACTU leader in the TWU, as quoted by Jules Weinberg in his **Harper’s** article:

“I could always talk to a Jewish or Protestant worker ... but as soon as I’d approach another Catholic, before I could say a word, he’d tell me, ‘Look here, Ray, let’s leave religion out of this’.”

During the rise of the CIO, the ACTU’s program of virulent red-baiting didn’t go down with the militant CIO workers. Moreover, the role of the Catholic hierarchy in fascist Italy, Spain, Hungary, and Portugal was well known.

The fortunes of the ACTU began to turn after the war with the shift in US foreign policy and the break-up of the Washington-Moscow honeymoon. As the Truman administration began to whip up the “cold war” against the Soviet Union and the anti-red witch-hunt at home, the atmosphere became more favorable for the ACTU.